A SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL,

February 22*d.* $168\frac{8}{9}$.

By *EDW. STILLINGFLEET*, D.D.
Dean of St. *Paul's*.

LONDON,
Printed for *Henry Mortlocke*, at the *Phœnix*
in St. *Paul's* Church-yard, 1689.

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I. PETER 4. 18.

And if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear.

THIS Epiſtle was written by S. *Peter* for the Incouragement of Chriſtians under all their Sufferings; but theſe Words ſeem to carry ſo much Terrour and Severity in them, as though none but Martyrs and Confeſſours could have any Reaſon to hope for Salvation, and all others were to be left in Deſpair. Although Mankind be not eaſily ſatisfied concerning the Puniſhment denounced againſt *the Ungodly and Sinner*, yet the Juſtice of God, the Equity of his Commands, the Freedom of their Choice, the Contempt of Grace, and their Wilfull and Obſtinate Impenitence, take away all juſt Cauſe of Complaint: But, that *the Righteous ſhould ſcarcely be ſaved*, ſeems hardly reconcilable with the Grace, and Deſign, and Promiſes, of the Goſpel.

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For the *righteous* here are not vain, proud, ſelf-conceited Hypocrites, ſuch who *think they need no Repentance*, but ſuch who by the Grace of God were brought off from their former
1 Pet. 1. 18, 19, 20. Sins, and were *redeemed from their vain Converſation with the pretious bloud of Chriſt, who had puriſied their Souls in obeying the Truth through*
c. 2. v. 9. *the Spirit*; Who were *a choſen Generation, a royal Prieſthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People*; yet of ſuch as theſe it is ſaid, *If the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved.* But how can this agree with the Infinite Goodneſs and Mercy of God declared in the Goſpel, whereby Sinners are courted and encouraged to repent with the Hopes and Promiſe of Salvation? Did not *Chriſt come to ſave Sinners*, and St. *Paul* call this *a faithfull*
1 Tim. 1. 15. *ſaying and worthy of all acceptation*; and yet after all, *ſhall the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved?* What
Luk. 15. 7, 10. *Joy in Heaven can there be over one Sinner that Repents*, if after his Repentance it be ſo hard to come to Heaven? Doth not Chriſt himſelf invite thoſe who are *weary, and heavy laden, to come to him*, with a Promiſe that *he will*
Matt. 11. 28. *give reſt to their Souls?* But what Reſt can they have, who, notwithſtanding their coming to him, do with ſo much difficulty attain to Eternal Reſt? How can that be ſaid to be *an eaſie*
v. 30. *yoke, and a light burthen*, which is of it ſelf ſo hard to be born, and the Reward which

is

is to make it eaſie ſo hard to be attained?

If it be ſaid *that this Expreſſion*, that *the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved*, is to be *underſtood* of ſome Sufferings, and Perſecutions, *which the Chriſtians were then to undergo*, and it was very hard *for any, though never ſo righteous, to eſcape*; *and that to this v.* 17. *refers*, I anſwer, That this doth not clear the Difficulty; For from whence doth this Neceſſity of Suffering ariſe? Is it not enough to repent and forſake our Sins, but we muſt undergo ſome Puniſhment for them in this Life, although God remits that of the World to come? But how is this conſiſtent with the Fulneſs of Chriſt's Satisfaction, and the Freeneſs of God's Remiſſion of Sins? And if God's Juſtice be ſatisfied and the Sins be forgiven, what need can there be that Perſons muſt here ſuffer for their Sins before they can come to Heaven?

So that for the clearing this Subject theſe things muſt be ſpoken to:

I. In what Senſe the *righteous* are ſaid to be *ſcarcely ſaved.*

II. How this is conſiſtent with the Grace of the Goſpel.

III. What Incouragement there is for us to hope for Salvation, when the righteous are ſaid to be *ſcarcely ſaved.*

I. In what ſenſe the *righteous* are ſaid to *be ſcarcely ſaved.* That may be underſtood Two ways;

(1.) With Reſpect to Accidental Difficulties ariſing from the particular Circumſtances of Times and Seaſons.

(2.) With Reſpect to the General Terms of Salvation, which are common to all Perſons and Times.

1. With reſpect to Accidental Difficulties ariſing from the particular Circumſtances of Times and Perſons. For the Difficulties of Religion are not alike in all Times, nor to all Perſons; for they are not like a Geometrical Meaſure, which is always exactly the ſame; but rather like a Voyage at Sea, which is to be managed by the ſame Compaſs and to the ſame Port; but it ſometimes proves Calm and Pleaſant, and at other times Stormy and Tempeſtuous. Which chiefly happens, when a Religion appears New, or goes about to Reform the Old; for then it is ſure to meet with all the Oppoſition, which the Paſſions, and Intereſts, and Prejudices of partial Men can raiſe againſt it. Its true, he that *ſtills the raging of the Sea, and the Madneſs of the People*, can, when he pleaſes, calm the moſt violent Paſſions of Mankind, and make way for the Reception of Truth in their Minds; but he thinks fit by ſuch means to trie and diſcover

diſcover what is in Men. Who never ſhew their Paſſions more violently and unreaſonably than when they are mask'd under a pretence of Zeal againſt *Hereſie* and *Innovation*. For that blinds their Underſtandings, corrupts their Wills, inflames their Paſſions, hardens their Hearts, and ſhuts up all bowels of Pity and Compaſſion towards Brethren. Thus it was among the *Jews* towards the Chriſtians, both in *Judea*, and in the ſeveral Places of their Diſperſion: For they looked on them as Apoſtates and Hereticks, and treated them, not onely with the utmoſt Scorn and Contempt, but with all the Fury and Rage imaginable, and where their own Power fell ſhort, they called in the Aſſiſtence of the *Roman* Governours, repreſenting the Chriſtians to them, as an Upſtart and Pernicious Sect, Seditious and Turbulent, and therefore ought by all means to be ſuppreſt: By ſuch Inſinuations the poor Chriſtians in the *Eaſtern* Provinces of the *Jewiſh* Diſperſion, were miſerably haraſſed and proceeded againſt as Malefactours. Thus it was at that time when S. *Peter* wrote his Epiſtle to the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, who were ſcattered throughout *Pontus*, *Galatia*, *Cappadocia*, *Aſia*, and *Bithynia*, 1 Pet. 1. 1. where there were abundance of *Jews*, and many Converts, but very hardly uſed among them. St. *Peter* having been imployed much among them, (*the Apoſtleſhip of the Circumciſion being committed* Gal. 2. 8.

mitted to him) and being withdrawn into the Kingdom of *Parthia*, where he had planted a Church at *Babylon*, (not ſo deſolate at that time, as not to be ſufficient for ſuch a Number, as appears by *Strabo* and *Joſephus*) from thence he writes this excellent Epiſtle for the Advice and Comfort of the ſuffering Chriſtians. He adviſeth them to behave themſelves with great Prudence and Care of their Actions, to give no Advantage againſt themſelves, by doing any ill things; and then, if it pleaſed God to call them out to ſuffer, they ought not to murmur, or complain, or miſtruſt his Gracious Providence towards them,

1 Pet. 4. 19. but *commit themſelves to God in well doing, as unto a faithfull Creatour.* And if they did think it hard for them to ſuffer theſe things, they ought to conſider, there was a Wiſe Directour of them above, who had beforehand appointed ſuch a Series of Events, that although their Enemies rejoyced to ſee them ſuffer in the firſt Place, yet

Although *Babylon* were very much exhauſted, by the Neighbourhood of *Seleucia* firſt, and afterwards of *Cteſiphon*; yet I ſee no Reaſon to conclude that *Babylon* was not then capable of having a Church in it, when S. *Peter* wrote this *Epiſtle*. For *Joſephus*, lib. 18. owns, that there was in *Babylon* πλῆθος Ἰουδαίων in the time when *Hyrcanus* was ſent thither; and out of ſuch *a multitude of Jews* a Church might eaſily be gathered. The Calamities which befell the *Jews* of thoſe parts afterwards rather reach to the *Country* than the *City* of *Babylon*. And when ſuch Numbers of *Jews* are allowed to have been after them in *Cteſiphon*, *Nearda* and *Niſibis*, which were all Cities in thoſe parts, I ſee no cauſe to queſtion that there were great Numbers of *Jews* at that time in *Babylon*; ſince even in *Trajan's* time, they are conſeſſed to have been very numerous in *Meſopotamia*. *Strabo*, lib. 16. ſaith, *that a great part of Babylon was deſerted in his time*, and ſo it might well be, and leave room enough for a Chriſtian Church to be there notwithſtanding. So that no reaſon appears ſufficient to me to take *Babylon* in any other ſenſe, than for the City generally known by that name, without flying to any Myſtical ſenſe, or a *Strong place* in *Egypt* bearing that name; there being leſs probability of a Church in a *Garriſon*, as *Strabo* deſcribes it, than in the Remainders of ſo great a City.

yet their Turn would come not long after, and then these Enemies of the Gospel would feel the Severity of God's Wrath and Displeasure against them. Which is the meaning of the foregoing Verse,

For the time is come that Judgment must begin at the House of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? i. e. Christ hath foretold Desolation and Ruine to come upon the Jewish Nation, for rejecting him when he came to save them; but he withall saith, that *before these things, they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the Synagogues, and into Prisons, being brought before Kings and rulers for my name's sake.* Which implies a severe persecution of the Christian Church, begun by the *Jews*, but carried on by the Governours of Kingdoms and Provinces. And therefore saith the Apostle, although *the time be now come that Judgment begins at the House of God*, yet it will not end there; but that which is only a Cup of Trembling and Astonishment to them shall be a Cup of Fury and Destruction to the Obstinate and Impenitent *Jews*. The case was hard to the poor Christians, but it would be much more severe towards their cruel Persecutours; for if the *righteous*, whom God loves, meet with such sharp usage by his Permission

Luk. 21. 12.

miſſion for a time, the day will come when God will avenge the Cauſe of his ſuffering People, and make their *ungodly and perfidious* Enemies feel the ſmart of his diſpleaſure in ſuch manner that they ſhall not know where to hide themſelves, *Where ſhall the ſinner and ungodly appear.*

But that which I obſerve from hence is, that there are ſome Accidental Circumſtances which depend on Divine Providence, which may make the condition of ſome Men, as to Salvation, much more difficult than that of others: For it is no Act. 14. 22. ſuch eaſie matter *to go through many Tribulations into the Kingdom of God, i. e.* to be content to be contemned and reproached as the worſt of Men; to be torn from Friends and Relations, and all the Comforts of Life; to be caſt into loathſome Priſons, and more loathſome Company in them; to be in continual expectation of ſuch cruel Uſage and Torments, as make Death be look'd on as their beſt Friend and moſt ſeaſonable Deliverer.

If Sufferings do not riſe ſo high, yet when men cannot keep Faith and a good Conſcience, without hazarding the loſs of what mankind are apt to ſet too great a value upon, their Eaſe, and Riches, and Expectations in this World, even theſe make it harder for ſuch Perſons to get to Heaven; becauſe Sincerity and Conſtancy

cy are the neceſſary Conditions of it, which may be tryed much more in ſome than it is in others. We muſt all have the ſame Journey's-end, if we hope to get to Heaven, but ſome may meet with a freer Road, and a calmer Seaſon, and better Company, in their Journey than others. However it happens we muſt go through all, and not be diſcourag'd at any appearance of Difficulties upon our way.

But herein Mankind are apt to be deceived, as though all the Difficulties lay in a ſuffering Condition; whereas a ſoft, and careleſs, and voluptuous Life is rather more dangerous to their Souls, becauſe perſons are leſs apt to ſuſpect their danger. He that is ſet upon by force and violence endeavours to defend himſelf as well as he can; but he that is betrayed under a pretence of Kindneſs is drawn into his Ruine before he is aware, and goes on chearfully to his own Deſtruction. Proſperity hath the true nature of an *Opiate*, for it ſtupifies and pleaſes at the ſame time. The Temptations of the ſuffering Side are apt to allarm, awake, and rouſe up the ſleepy Powers of the Soul; whereas the gentle and eaſie Condition of Life either lays them aſleep, by a kind of Intoxication, or ſo diverts them from all ſerious things, as puts them out of the very way to Heaven. For, the firſt thing in it is a ſteady and ſerious Reſolu-

tion of Mind to doe what lies in them to go thither; which can never be done without a true Conſideration of the vanities of this world, how pleaſing ſoever; and a fixed and ſettled Judgment, preferring the Happineſs of Heaven before all the moſt alluring Pleaſures of this Life.

So that the different Circumſtances of Life do make the way of Salvation more difficult to ſome than to others.

But this is not all; for there are many things which make it more difficult to ſome than to others, which are of another Nature. Some Tempers are more flexible and pliable than others; more capable of hearkning to Reaſon; and more apt to reflect on their own Actions; whereas others are naturally Stiff and Obſtinate, who ſtick as faſt to an Opinion or Prejudice which they have once taken up, as if they were fatally determined to it; and ſuch as theſe can hardly ever be convinced they are in an Errour, unleſs by a Power ſuperiour to Nature. Some again, are very eaſily convinced of a Fault, but very hardly reclaimed; for that facility of Temper which makes them eaſie to be convinced, lays them open to the next Temptation, which they are not able to withſtand. Theſe are always repenting and amending and beginning to reform, but without

out the Grace of God, not able to go through with it. Some are modeſt and baſhfull Sinners, whom Fear and Shame may reſtrain; others are ſo hardned and impudent in their Wickedneſs, that they deny even the very firſt Principles of Morality as well as Religion, and not onely refuſe to hearken to Reproof, but reject it with Scorn and Indignation. And it cannot be ſuppoſed that the Grace of God, working on mens Minds in a way ſuitable to them, ſhould have as eaſie an Admittance into one as into the other; for the one are like a Houſe with doors ſhut, but eaſily opened; the other like a Houſe not onely ſhut, but bolted and barracadoed.

Again, ſome have had the Advantage of a Pious and Religious Education, by which the Principles of Piety and Vertue have made an early Impreſſion on their minds, and have been a continual Check upon evil Inclinations; and if they have been too weak to ſubdue them, yet they have been ſtrong enough to prevent their Extravagancies, or to bring them to a ſpeedy Repentance, and to take up firmer Reſolutions; and ſuch are more eaſily brought to themſelves and ſettled in a vertuous courſe of Life. But the generality of Mankind, through a wretched Careleſneſs, mind not the early Improvement of their Children in what is good; and what education they give them tends to

any thing more than the Planting the ſenſe of God, and true Religion, and Vertue, in them. It were well, if they would but let Nature alone in their Children; but inſtead of that, they often place ſuch about them, who humour them in their worſt Inclinations, and give them an early taſte of Profaneneſs and Irreligion; ſo that when they come into the World, they run into all manner of wickedneſs, and commit it with greedineſs, having ſo quick a Reliſh of it; and then indeed it is a very hard matter to bring them to Repentance; for that is to take Shame and Diſhonour to themſelves, to ſay they have been Fools, and have done wickedly; and rather than doe this, they chuſe to go on in their Impieties, *and treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath.*

Thoſe who magnify the Freedom of Will in Mankind in this degenerate State, ſeem to conſider them onely in Theory and Speculation; not as they are, but as they ought to have been. It is like that which they call the Spring in ſome Bodies, which are apt to dilate and expand themſelves, but may be eaſily oppreſſed with ſuch a weight as makes it impoſſible for them to inlarge themſelves till it be removed. There is no doubt in Mankind, conſidered in it ſelf, a Power of acting according to Reaſon, which is the trueſt Freedom, (for a Power of acting otherwiſe

otherwiſe is Weakdneſs and Folly,) but what through the Natural Propenſity to Evil; what through the Power of bad Examples; what through the violence of ſome Tempers and Paſſions; what through the cloudineſs of ſome Underſtandings, from bodily Diſtempers; what through the ſtrength of evil Habits, and corrupt Diſpoſitions, there is ſcarce ſuch a thing as Freedom of Will left, eſpecially as to matters of Salvation. So that if the Scripture did not ſo plainly expreſs the Neceſſity of Divine Grace for the Converſion of Sinners (as it doth,) the mere Conſideration of the ſtate of human Nature would make me believe it, ſuppoſing that any part of Mankind be deſigned to be fitted for Heaven. For although the Difficulties be not alike in all, yet, of one kind or other, they are ſuch as cannot be overcome by our ſelves, without the Power of Divine Grace *Exciting*, *Preventing*, and *Aſſiſting* of us.

(2.) Having thus ſhewed what Difficulties there are which ariſe from the Different Circumſtances of Times and Perſons, I am now to conſider thoſe which ariſe from the Terms of Salvation, which are common to all Perſons and Times.

Here we muſt ſuppoſe Salvation to be the thing aimed at, as the Chief End or Happineſs of

of ſuch Men; and here are two kinds of Difficulties to be enquired into;

(1.) Such as are implied in the general Purſuit of Happineſs.

(2.) Such as immediately relate to this kind of Happineſs.

(1.) Such as are implied in the general Purſuit of Happineſs: For Happineſs is not a thing of Chance or Neceſſity, but a Matter of Choice and Deſign. It is a vulgar miſtake (and I wiſh it were onely among the vulgar) to account thoſe Happy, who are fortunate: But this Notion of Happineſs was unanimouſly rejected by all the Ancient Moraliſts. Some of them indeed have thought it repugnant to common Senſe, to call thoſe happy who were under great Calamities, *i. e.* who were, in the ſenſe of Mankind, miſerable: But then they utterly denied, that the beſt outward Circumſtances could make a Man happy; for that muſt depend upon the Temper of a Man's mind, and his Improvement in Vertue. Theſe are ſome things which the Moraliſts agreed in, which may be of great uſe to us for clearing the Chriſtian Doctrine in this matter about the Difficulty of attaining Salvation.

(1.) That Happineſs did conſiſt in one Uniform Deſign of Life, *i. e.* that a Man muſt chuſe

chuſe one proper and chief End to himſelf, and ſo order his Thoughts and Actions that he may attain it. And therefore the diſſolute and careleſs liver, that minds or thinks of nothing but Eating, and Drinking, and Sleeping, and paſſing away his time, was no more capable of Happineſs than a Brute, which exceeds him in that which he accounts the Happineſs of Life.

(2.) That there muſt be a Carefull and Attentive Mind to purſue this Deſign. And that is by keeping cloſe to thoſe Maxims, which were laid down as neceſſary to attain it. For, according to their different Notions, they had different Maxims, or Rules of Practice, either as to Vertue or Pleaſure, and as Men did obſerve theſe, they were nearer to their Happineſs: But if they broke their Rules, they muſt blame themſelves if they miſſed of it.

(3.) That any Man who deſired to be happy, muſt above all things take Pains about himſelf: For without that they concluded it impoſſible for a man to be happy, let his outward Condition in the World be what it would: For that was too uncertain a foundation to build ſuch a Structure upon. Therefore it was neceſſary for any one that pretended to happineſs, to have a true Notion of what conduced to it in his Mind; and to bring his Paſſions into Order. For all the world cannot make one

whoſe

whoſe Paſſions are violent and extravagant, to be happy; no more than him to be a ſound and healthfull Man, that hath a Fever, and a Dropſy, and Convulſions, at the ſame time upon him. For the violence of Luſt is an inward burning Fever; Covetouſneſs, or an inſatiable Deſire of Riches, a perpetual Dropſy, which encreaſes the Thirſt by an endeavour to quench it; and Exceſſive Anger is a Convulſion of thoſe Powers of the Soul which ought to be ſedate, and compoſed, in any one who pretends to Happineſs. But when they conſidered the force of natural Inclinations, they found it was no eaſie matter to make the Unreaſonable part to be governed by the Reaſonable. For the leſs of Reaſon, the more wilfulneſs and ſtubbornneſs; and therefore the harder to be brought to Reaſon and to be govern'd by it. And herein lay the main Difficulty; and after all their Arguments, and Rules, and Directions, humane Nature was found too refractory to ſubmit; and the violence of Man's Paſſions overthrew all the plauſible Schemes of Happineſs which the Philoſophers had ſet up. To which I add,

(4.) That thoſe who conſulted moſt the Eaſe and Pleaſure of Mankind, were forced to put Men upon ſome hard and unpleaſant things to make any thing like Happineſs to conſiſt in Pleaſure. For they caſt off all Riot and Exceſs, all Intemperance

temperance and Luxury, becauſe the Pain which followed exceeded the Pleaſure; and therefore they made Temperance and Chaſtity neceſſary to the true Pleaſure of Life. They reduced the Happineſs of Pleaſure to a fixed and ſetled State, and ſo took it off from that which was onely ſenſual. They brought Mens Deſires within ſo narrow a Compaſs, that the true Lovers of Pleaſure would abhor ſuch Confinements as they made neceſſary. And although they could never conquer the Fears of Inviſible Powers, and of Death, yet they thought no Happineſs was to be had without it. So that all were agreed, that it was impoſſible to attain to any thing that looked like Happineſs without ſome real Difficulty, which was neceſſary to be undergone, although the Succeſs were uncertain.

(2.) Let us now conſider the Difficulties relating to Salvation, or that Happineſs which Chriſtians expect. And here I ſhall ſhew,

(1.) That it is far more Reaſonable to go through Difficulties, for the ſake of it.

(2.) That they are not ſuch, but that we may reaſonably hope to overcome them.

(1.) It is more Reaſonable to expect Difficulties in the way of Salvation. For the more excellent and deſirable the Happineſs is, the more it is worth the while for us to take pains

about it; especially when there is a Certainty of attaining it. The Moralists had but very dark, and confused, and uncertain Notions of Happiness; something they saw, but with a very glimmering light: They found that all Men desired it, and wise Men sought after it; but wherein it lay, and how to be attained, they could not agree. The most considering Men were convinced it must be in the best part of our selves, and that is our minds, and in the greatest Perfection of that, *viz.* Vertue and Goodness. But they met with insuperable Difficulties in the way to it, and the best among them sadly lamented the state of humane Nature, after all the pains and endeavours they had used to rectifie their Opinions, and to subdue their Passions. For they found it too restiff and untractable, too much under the Sway and Dominion of the sensitive Appetite, for them ever to hope by the mere Power of Reason to bring it into such Subjection, as to pretend to a total Conquest. And those who refined Pleasure so much, as to make it a Happiness fit for Mankind to own, did make a Happiness just as they made their Gods, *viz.* a Fine, Subtil, Airy, Pleasant No-thing, or that had no Solidity in it: For the *Epicurean* Happiness, with all its Refinements, was rather a matter of Speculation than Practice; and after all was not

not worth ſo much pains about it, but like the Gourd, which after its paring, and cleanſing, and dreſſing, is fit onely to be caſt upon the Dunghill.

But it cannot be ſaid that the Happineſs offered to Chriſtians is of ſuch a Nature: For it is really the beſt, the moſt valuable and deſirable Good, not promiſed to be enjoyed in this mean, deſpicable, and uncertain ſtate of Life, but reſerved for a more free, ſpiritual and continuing State. So our Apoſtle calls it, *an Inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for you.* Such is the Condition of the World without us here, and of the Paſſions and Infirmities within us, that it is a vain thing to expect a true Happineſs to be enjoyed in this Life; the utmoſt we can hope for, is to be prepared for a better; and God knows there is Difficulty enough in that. We have Hearts ſo vain and ſenſual, ſo addicted to the Pleaſures and Impertinencies of this World, ſo prepoſſeſſed with the Objects of Senſe, that it is no eaſie matter to bring them ſo much as in earneſt to conſider of another World. But it is yet harder to fix the Thoughts of it upon our Minds, ſo as to make a deep Impreſſion upon them, as they muſt do, if we make the Happineſs of Heaven our Chief End and Deſign. Suppoſing that Paradiſe were ſtill

1 Pet. 1. 4.

upon Earth in its first Glory, and to be found by the Description which *Moses* gives of it; a man may think often concerning it, where it lies, what the Rivers are by which it is to be discovered; but all this amounts but to a mere Speculation: But suppose that he takes up a Resolution to go thither, what other kind of thoughts hath he then about it, as to the Truth and Certainty of the Place, and the Way that leads thither, and the Difficulties he is like to meet with? Which make another kind of Impression than the former dry Speculation did. If a Man doth not think Heaven worth all the Pains and Difficulties which lie in our way to it, he never yet had one serious and becoming thought concerning it. For the Happiness propos'd is really so great and invaluable, that the more we think of it, the more we shall esteem it, and the more we shall despise and triumph over the greatest Difficulties in order to it; it being no less than the Perfect Enjoyment of the most Perfect Good, in a most Perfect State of Life, and nothing can be desired by humane Nature greater than this.

(2.) The Difficulties in our Way to Salvation are not such, but we may reasonably hope to overcome them; *i. e.* if we set our selves about it; otherwise a very mean Difficulty will appear too great for us. Therefore we must

suppose

ſuppoſe not onely a willing Mind, but a firm Reſolution to doe what lies in us. And there are two things to ſhew that we may hope to overcome them;

(1.) That the moſt difficult Duties are in themſelves reaſonable to be performed by us.

(2.) That God offers his Gratious Aſſiſtence for the Performance of them.

(1.) That the moſt difficult Duties are in themſelves reaſonable. I mean ſuch whoſe Difficulty doth not ariſe from accidental outward Circumſtances; but from a reſpect to the preſent ſtate and condition of humane Nature. Such as,

(1.) *True Repentance*; which is one of the hardeſt Works of a Man's Life, when he hath been long engaged in a Courſe of Sinning againſt Conſcience. It is not hard for ſuch a one to be made ſenſible that he hath done amiſs; for he that acts againſt his Judgment is, as *Ariſtotle* obſerves, *not apt to Repent*, *i.e.* to find fault with himſelf for his own Actions, and to reſolve to amend. There is a ſort of Diſpleaſure againſt Sin, which is conſiſtent with the Practice of it, which is called by the Caſuiſts, *Attritio Impœnitentium*; but they ſay it is without a purpoſe of forſaking it, if there be ſuch a purpoſe that they ſay is *Attritio Pœnitentium*; but if it be an ineffectual Purpoſe, the Scripture

Ὁ δ' ἀκρατὴς μεταμελητικὸς πᾶς Nicom. *l.* 7. *c.* 8.

Inter cetera mala, hoc quoq; habet ſtultitia proprium, ſemper incipit vivere. Sen. *Ep.* 13.

no

no where calls it *Repentance*. For as long as the habitual Practice continues, it is certain that man's Love to his Sin exceeds his Hatred of it; and what Repentance can that be which is consistent with a prevailing Love of Sin? When persons were first made Christians, their Repentance was easily discerned, whether true or false, because it was a publick and solemn Renunciation of all their former Sins; but when men have accustomed themselves to Sin under a Profession to renounce their Sins, it is a harder matter to find out the Sincerity of their Repentance as to those Sins. And here a difference must be made as to the Nature and Kind of Sins: For there are some Sins which all agree to be Sins, yet it is a hard matter to convince Persons that they are guilty of them, such as *Hypocrisie*, *Schism*, and *Idolatry*, which men will find something to excuse themselves from, notwithstanding the clearest Evidence against them. Some are such Strangers to themselves, that they do not suspect themselves for those Sins which others easily discern in them, as is common in the case of *Pride*, and *Envy*, and *Covetousness*, and *Superstition*. It cannot be supposed, that Persons should so particularly repent of such Sins which they are not sensible of; but where Self-love blinds it cannot excuse. And where such evil habits prevail, persons must repent,

and

and ſearch, and examine themſelves in order to a particular Repentance. There are other Sins which are really perpetual burthens to a good Mind, but it knows not how to get rid of them with the utmoſt Care; ſuch as inward Motions to Sin, ſudden Heats and Surpriſes, mixt Infirmities, Coldneſs in Devotion, Diſtractions in Prayer, and many Omiſſions of Perſonal Duties; in ſuch Caſes as theſe, if we do not allow Sincerity of Repentance without through Amendment, we make a General Repentance inſignificant, and make the Condition of many good Men deſperate; for none can be ſaved without true Repentance. And if there can be no true Repentance without actual forſaking all ſuch kinds of Sins, there is no ſuch thing as true Repentance to be found. But there are other Sins of a more dangerous and malignant Nature, which argue a very bad Mind; ſuch as *Malice* and *Hatred*, *a rooted Averſion to what is Good*; and *a ſtrong Inclination to Evil.* There are ſome Sins that are groſs and notorious, of which St. *Paul* ſaith, *The luſts of the Fleſh are manifeſt*; *i. e.* ſuch Sins are eaſily known to be Sins, and Mens Conſciences condemn them even while they commit them; ſuch as *Murther*, *Adultery*, *Intemperance*, *Injuſtice*, *Perjury*, and ſuch like. Of which the Apoſtle after declares, *That they who*

doe

Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Eph. 5. 5, 6. *doe ſuch things ſhall never come to Heaven.* Therefore as to them, ſuch a Repentance is neceſſary as implies not merely a diſlike and ſorrow for them, but a thorough Change of a Man's Mind, and the Courſe of his Life, with reſpect to them. And ſurely it is no eaſie matter to new mold the Temper of ones Mind, and to turn the Tide of our Actions; to break off our beloved Sins, and to bring forth fruits worthy of Repentance. This is indeed a hard Work; but yet it is a moſt reaſonable Work. It is hard, but it is like the taking violent Phyſick in ſome Diſeaſes, where the humour muſt be purged out, or the Party muſt dye; the Uneaſineſs is not to be conſidered, but the Neceſſity; and in ſuch a Caſe the Mind cannot be at Eaſe till it be done. So that the very Difficulty of Repentance lays the Foundation for greater Peace of Mind afterwards. And who will think much of ſuch a Difficulty, which is ſo neceſſary to Peace with God and his own Conſcience?

(2.) *The Love of God is above all things.* This is ſo Fundamental a Duty, that we cannot place our Happineſs in God without it. For if we do not love God above all things, we muſt love ſomewhat elſe ſo; and whatever we love above all things, that we make our Happineſs. But I am affraid the greateſt part of the World love all things above him: For we are

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to judge of Mens love and eſteem by what they court, and purſue, and deſire, and delight in; it is impoſſible there ſhould be ſuch a Love of God, where the Stream of the Affections and Courſe of Actions run quite another way; I mean, to the vanities of this World, of which the Apoſtle hath ſaid, *If any man loves it, the love of the Father is not in him.* But this is a hard Point: For ſome degree of love to this World is allowable; elſe how can we thank God for the Comforts of it? And all Perſons who know God do grant, that his Perfections are far above all the World, and therefore they ſeem to have a value and eſteem for him above it. We muſt here diſtinguiſh a Notional Eſteem from that which is Practical. A Notional Eſteem implies no more than a mere Conviction that God muſt exceed all the Excellencies which are ſcattered in the Creatures; but a Practical Eſteem is, when the Acts of our Souls towards him are ſuitable to the Apprehenſions we have in our Minds concerning him. When we adore his infinite Perfections, and delight in the Meditation of them; when we deſire to doe all things pleaſing to him, and avoid what we know to offend him; when we believe, and hope, and truſt in him, and commit our ſelves to his Conduct in this World, in hopes of being happy with him in another. This is the Love

1 Joh. 2. 15.

of God above all things; but alas! Where is this Love of God to be found? It is no very hard matter to work up a heated and devout Imagination to the Fancy of Raptures and Ec-
1 Joh. 5. 3. ſtaſies and Myſtical Unions; but after all, *This is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments.* As the true Love of a Prince is not to flatter and admire him, and watch for his Smiles; but to obſerve his Directions, and obey his Orders, and to doe what is moſt for his Service. And although ſuch a Love of God be hard to thoſe whoſe hearts are full of carnal Affections, and are taken up with the Follies and Vanities of this World, yet we cannot take one true ſtep in the way to Heaven without the Love of God. For even thoſe who have moſt corrupted the Doctrine of Repentance do confeſs, that there can be no true Contrition for Sin, which is not founded on the Love of God as the Principle of it, and however they have dangerouſly flattered and deceived thoſe who are ſo weak to believe them, that Attrition with the Sacrament of Penance is ſufficient to put men into the ſtate of Grace; yet St. *Peter*'s Keys muſt have an extraordinary virtue, if they can change Nature into Grace, or Fear into Love, or mere Horrour of Conſcience into true Repentance.

But although ſuch a Love of God above all things be ſo hard a thing to minds prepoſſeſſed with

with the Love of other things; yet no one can deny that it is the moſt reaſonable Duty in the World. The very Thoughts of God, if they are ſuch as we ought to have, imply, that he is the Beſt, the Wiſeſt, the moſt Perfect Being, and therefore the moſt amiable and deſirable Object. And whither then ſhould the moſt natural Stream of our Affections run, but towards him? What do we mean to ſuffer ſo much earth and filthineſs to obſtruct the free paſſage of them in their moſt proper Courſe? What can we meet with in this deceitfull World, that can bear the leaſt proportion to ſuch Infinite Goodneſs? Oh what a difference is there between our Reaſon and our Love? We verily believe that God deſerves our Love above all things, and yet how ſmall a ſhare hath he in it? We love what we profeſs to deſpiſe above all things, *viz.* our Sins and this vain World; and we really too much deſpiſe what we ſtill profeſs to love above all things, *viz.* God and our Eternal Happineſs. O miſerable condition of Humanity! Made to be Happy, and yet fond of Miſery; Loving what's vain, and yet deſpiſing Vanity; Hating what's Good, and yet accounts it beſt; And therefore fitteſt for our Choice and Love. The Love of God above all things is ſo juſt and reaſonable, that thoſe who doe it leaſt approve it as the

moſt excellent Imployment of our Minds; and thoſe that doe it moſt, think they fall ſhort of what God deſerves from them. The more we know of God, the more we know that we ought to love and delight in him; and all our Difficulty in the Practice of it can never make us think it is unreaſonable to love Him above all things, without whom nothing can make us happy, and who alone can doe it.

(3.) *Univerſal Holineſs of Heart and Life.* If this were not neceſſary to Salvation, our Apoſtle would not have preſſed it with ſo much earneſtneſs as he doth; *As obedient children, not faſhioning your ſelves according to the former luſts in your ignorance, but as he which hath called you is holy, ſo be ye holy in all manner of converſation*; becauſe it is written, *be ye holy, for I am holy.* Again, *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the Soul.* And again, *That he no longer ſhould live the reſt of his time in the fleſh, to the luſts of men, but to the will of God.* This is a hard ſaying to Mankind, who part with nothing ſo hardly as with their Sins; yet theſe muſt be parted with, if ever we hope to get to Heaven. I do not ſay, that a Perfection in Holineſs is required, (for that were to ſuppoſe Happineſs in this World, ſince there can be no perfect holineſs without it,) but there muſt

1 Pet. 1. 14, 15, 16.

2. 11.

4. 2.

must be a constant, uniform, and sincere endeavour after it; by avoiding all known and wilfull Sins, and doing all our Duties to God in such a manner as our Conscience cannot charge us with gross Neglect or Insincerity. There are some things we cannot say are downright Sins; yet if they lead to them; if they indispose our Minds to God, and his Service; if they tend to Lightness and Vanity, and make us more easie to entertain the Devil's Temptations, we ought to avoid them as the Snares of the Devil. So, on the other side, there are some things which we cannot say are plain, and express, and necessary Duties of Religion, yet they tend so much to keep up the Life and Spirit of it, that a general Design of Holiness is enough to recommend them. As to positive Duties of Religion, we cannot exactly fix the Time, and Measure, and Season of their Performance, which must vary according to Circumstances; but this we can say, that the more Persons set themselves to the Practice of Holiness, and the greater Preparation they make for another World, the more they will delight in the performance of God's Service, and the more ready to embrace any Opportunities for it. Those who would have all Religious Duties determined as to the Circumstances of them, are like Men who would

would have punctual Rules ſet down, how often two Friends ſhould converſe with each other, and how long time they are to ſtay together. True Friendſhip will need none of thoſe things, but will incline them to embrace the beſt opportunities for mutual Converſation, leſt too long diſtance beget a Coldneſs firſt, and then the Friendſhip diſſolves. It is no hard matter to pray as far as words go; but to pray with Zeal and Devotion, to attend upon God with that ſerioufneſs of Mind we ought to doe, will require our utmoſt Attention. And it is no eaſie matter to keep our Minds compoſed and fit to converſe with God in Prayer, and other ſolemn Duties of Religion. But as hard as this appears to us, it is moſt fit and reaſonable that we ſhould doe it: For what an unbecoming thing it is to worſhip God in a careleſs, trifling, perfunctory manner; as though nothing leſs deſerved the imploying the Vigour of our Minds about, than the Service of God. But how can we love him with all our Hearts, if we do not ſerve him with all our Mind and Strength.

(4.) *Reſignation of our ſelves to God*; This 1 Pet. 5. 7. the Apoſtle calls *caſting all our Care upon him.* This is a very wiſe Duty if we can attain to it, becauſe it eaſes our minds of many Fears and Perplexities, both as to our ſelves and others: But

But it is no eaſie thing to ſet our minds free from ſolicitous thoughts, about poſſible Evils. We cannot mend our Condition, nor prevent what is determined by our moſt anxious Care; but we may enjoy our ſelves with far greater Peace and Tranquillity, if we can be content to commit our ſelves to the beſt Conduct, and that is of him that Governs the World. And whatever ſtrugglings we may find within our ſelves about it, yet the more we ſearch, and weigh, and conſider things, the more we ſhall be ſatisfied, that the Reſignation of our ſelves to God, as to all our Concernments in this World, is the beſt means to calm our Paſſions, to abate our Fears, to prevent our Impatience, and ſo to attain to that *Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is with God of great Price.* 1 Pet. 3. 4.

But if all theſe Duties be ſo neceſſary to our being ſaved, and we lie under ſuch Difficulties as to the Performance of them, their appearing to be Reaſonable makes our Condition ſo much worſe: For to find it ſo hard to doe what we are convinced is moſt Reaſonable to be done, is one of the worſt Circumſtances of our Condition. Its true we do not want Faculties of Underſtanding and Will; but what then, if our Moral Indiſpoſitions make theſe uſeleſs to our Spiritual Advantage? A man that is like to be ſtifled in a large

large Veſſel full of Downy Feathers, cannot complain of the hardneſs of what he lies upon, for all things feel ſoft and eaſie about him, yet he may be ſtifled with them; our evil Habits, and corrupt Inclinations, have nothing that feels hard or troubleſome to us; but if we cannot overcome them, they will certainly Ruine and Deſtroy us. There is therefore a Neceſſity of a higher Principle of Divine Grace to enable us to break thorough all theſe Difficulties. Which Grace is ſo abundantly promiſed by the Goſpel to thoſe who ſeek it, that it comes at laſt to be our own fault, if we be not ſaved.

II. And this helps us to Reconcile the Difficulty of Salvation, with the Eaſineſs of the Terms of the Goſpel: For that which is not onely hard, but impoſſible to us, in our own ſtrength, may, by the mighty Power of Divine Grace, become not onely poſſible but eaſie to us: And withall thoſe things are accounted eaſie which bring eaſe, and that is a light burthen which rids one of a far harder. And thus the Commands of Chriſt, however hard in themſelves to us, yet being conſidered with the Grace of the Goſpel, and the bleſſed effect of inward Peace, which follows Sincere Obedience, even *his Yoke*, which keeps us moſt in, may be ſaid to be *Eaſie, and his Burthen*, which

which ſits hardeſt upon us, may be ſaid to be *light.*

III. And from hence we ſee what Encouragement there is ſtill for us to hope to be ſaved, if we be *righteous.*

There is none for the *Ungodly and Sinner*; *i. e.* for the profane contemner of God and Religion, or for the wicked Liver. For however they may flatter themſelves with vain and preſumptuous hopes, there is no more ground to think that the *righteous ſhall be ſaved*, than that *the ungodly and ſinner ſhall not:* For both are alike made known by the ſame Word of God.

" But what Comfort is it (may ſome ſay) " to hear that *the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved*, " when we are ſo conſcious to our ſelves of " our own unrighteouſneſs? If we could think " our ſelves *righteous* before God, there were " ſome hopes, but we are Sinners; and if we " ſhould deny or excuſe it, we ſhould be ſo " much more ſo; what hope can there be then " for us?

To this I ſhall anſwer, and conclude.

(1.) The *righteous* here ſpoken of were once great Sinners; for St. *Peter* mentions *their former luſts, and working the will of the Gentiles in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, exceſs of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.* Yet theſe are 1 Pet. 1. 14. 4. 3.

1. 18, 19. ſaid, *to be redeemed from their vain converſation*
1. 3, 4. *by the precious bloud of Chriſt; and to be begotten again to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, &c.*

There is therefore, not merely a Poſſibility of being ſaved, but a juſt and grounded Hope, if we renounce our former Sins, and become righteous, according to the Terms of the Goſpel; *i. e.* if we ſincerely repent of our Sins, and turn from them, and live the reſt of our time, not
4. 2. to the Luſts of Men, but to the Will of God. But if God had declared, that he expected from Mankind an entire and perfect Righteouſneſs without any Sin, it were all one, as to publiſh a general and irreverſible Decree of Damnation
Rom. 3. 23. to all, *for all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God.* From whence the Apoſtle well argues, that Men cannot ſave themſelves: But God, of his infinite Pity and Mercy towards the deplorable Condition of Mankind, hath found out a way to ſave them, *by the redemption which is in Chriſt Jeſus, whom he hath made a propitiation for their ſins.* Although therefore as to our ſelves we have no hopes, yet herein God hath magnified his abundant Love towards Sinners, that although they have ſinned to a high degree, yet if they be ſo far wearied with the burthen of their Sins, as to take Chriſt's Yoke upon them, then he hath promiſed Eaſe and

and Reſt to their Souls, which is the greateſt Bleſſing in the World, eſpecially to Repenting Sinners.

" But (ſome may again ſay) we have re-
" pented and ſinned, and ſinned and repented
" again, and can hardly yet tell which will get
" the better at laſt; we cannot ſay that we
" have entirely ſubmitted our Necks to Chriſt's
" Yoke, for that requires a great deal more
" than we can perform; how then can we be
" thought Righteous?

I anſwer therefore,

(2.) Where there is a ſincere and honeſt endeavour to pleaſe God, and keep his Commandments, although Perſons fail in the manner of doing it, God will accept of ſuch as Righteous: But where they pleaſe themſelves in their Unrighteouſneſs, and go on in it, hoping that God will accept ſome kind of Repentance in ſtead of it; or, where there hath been long ſtruggling, and many Acts of Repentance, and the Intereſt of Sin prevails; the Caſe of ſuch is very dangerous, but not deſperate. For as long as there is hopes of a true Repentance, there is of Salvation; and there is ſtill hopes of Repentance where Mens hearts are not hardned by an incorrigible Stiffneſs: For, according to the beſt Meaſures we can take by the Rules of the

the Goſpel, none are effectually excluded from the hopes of Salvation, but ſuch as exclude themſelves by their own Impenitency.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 24. line 22. dele *is*.